98TH CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES { REPORT
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TRANSFER OF CIVIL METEOROLOGICAL SATELLITES

NOVEMBER 8, 1983.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. FUQUA, from the Committee on Science and Technology, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 168]

The Committee on Science and Technology, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 168) expressing the sense of the Congress that it is not appropriate at this time to transfer ownership or management of any civil meteorological satellite system and associated ground system equipment to the private sector, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the concurrent resolution do pass.

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I. PURPOSE OF THE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

The purpose of the concurrent resolution is to halt the administration's effort to sell, or to issue a request-for-proposal to sell, the Nation's civil weather satellites. The intent of the resolution is to send a clear and unambiguous signal to the administration and to U.S. industry that the Congress does not consider such a transfer to be in the national interest at the present time.

II. COMMITTEE ACTIONS

House Concurrent Resolution 168 was introduced by Mr. Andrews (Texas) and 15 original cosponsors on September 19, 1983. The Sub-

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committee on Natural Resources, Agriculture Research and Environment reported the concurrent resolution to the full committee on October 19, 1983, by a rollcall vote of 13 to 0. On November 3, 1983, a quorum being present, the full Committee on Science and Technology ordered House Concurrent Resolution 168 reported by voice vote.

III. BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE LEGISLATION

On March 8, 1983, President Reagan announced his decision to commercialize civil weather and land remote-sensing satellites. Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige testified on the proposed sale on April 14, 1983, before the Subcommittee on Natural Resources, Agriculture Research and Environment and the Subcommittee on Space Science and Applications. The two subcommittees held four additional hearings on the proposed sale in June and July of 1983—hearings which elicited strong opposition to the proposed sale of civil weather satellites both from the private sector and from a broad range of current and former Government officials.

Congress first indicated its concern on the issue by including a provision in the fiscal year 1984 NASA authorization bill prohibiting transfer of weather or land remote-sensing satellites to the private sector without congressional approval. The NASA bill was signed into law (Public Law 98–52) on July 15, 1983. Meanwhile, a Source Evaluation Board for Civil Space Remote-Sensing (SEB) had been established to develop a request-for-proposal (RFP). The RFP would specify the terms under which U.S. industry would bid on the satellite systems. The final RFP was scheduled to be released to industry in December, 1983, with selection of the winning bid by the Secretary of Commerce tentatively set for May, 1984.

IV. COMMITTEE VIEWS

The committee is of the view, after reviewing both the public testimony and the draft RFP, that the proposal to transfer weather satellites is not sound, and that considerable time, effort, and resources will be saved by halting this proposal immediately. The committee has reached this conclusion for several reasons. Weather satellite data are utilized almost exclusively in public services—that is, well over 95 percent of the data generated by these satellites are used by civil and military agencies of the U.S. Government. The committee feels that it makes little sense to transfer an inherently governmental system and then to sign a long-term contract for data services which could cost the taxpayer millions of dollars. Nor can it be claimed that selling the satellites would increase commercial marketing of weather information, since the RFP requires that the successful bidder allow for free and open distribution of weather data by the Federal Government, both internationally and domestically.

Economics aside, the sale would also have extremely serious implications for both national security and public safety. Selling the civil weather satellites would necessitate significant, and perhaps unwieldy, oversight and regulation by the Department of Defense, which relies on civil weather satellite data both in its routine operations and in emergencies. The threat to public weather services arises because a

private operator with a secure, long-term contract would have little motivation to improve his services. The committee feels that stagnant technology would hurt everyone who relies on weather information—the farmer, the pilot, the citizen dependent on Federal tornado and hurricane warnings.

Perhaps most importantly, the committee feels that pursuing the sale of weather satellites distracts from and needlessly complicates the urgent need to maintain U.S. leadership in land remote-sensing. The sale of weather satellites was first suggested only as a means to facilitate the transfer of the Landsat system. The debate needs to be returned to its original track: how best to accomplish a transfer of our land remote-sensing capability. Continued coupling of the land and weather satellites only guarantees that the Landsat issue will not be resolved by the Congress until at least mid-1985. The committee believes that eliminating the weather satellite proposal now increases the likelihood of resolving the Landsat issue early next year, in time to maintain a viable U.S. presence in a growing field where we face stiff competition from the French and the Japanese.

In sum, the committee concurs with the view presented in a November 10, 1982 joint NASA/Department of Defense study (reports of the ad hoc Government interagency panels on civil operational remote-sensing satellite commercialization): "* * * there is considerable financial, policy, and program risk to the Government in commercializing weather satellites and there is no clear policy or financial benefit to be realized."

V. COST AND BUDGET DATA

In accordance with the requirements of section 252(b) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 and pursuant to rule XIII, clause 7 of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the committee estimates the costs to be incurred by the Federal Government during the current and 5 subsequent years as a result of the enactment of this legislation as follows:

Fiscal year:	*Amount*
1984	0
1985	0
1986	0
1987	0
1988	0
1989	0

VI. COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No other oversight findings and recommendations are under consideration by the Committee on Science and Technology on House Concurrent Resolution 168.

VII. SUMMARY OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No findings and recommendations on oversight activity pursuant to rule X, clause 2(b)(2), and rule XI, clause 2(l)(3), of the Rules of the House of Representatives, have been submitted by the Committee on Government Operations for inclusion in this report.

VIII. EFFECT OF LEGISLATION ON INFLATION

In accordance with rule XI, clause 2(l)(4), of the Rules of the House of Representatives, this legislation is assessed to have no adverse inflationary effect on prices and costs in the operations of the national economy.

IX. CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE, COST ESTIMATE

No information pursuant to section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 has been provided to the Committee on Science and Technology by the Congressional Budget Office as of November 9, 1983.

X. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee favorably reported the concurrent resolution House Concurrent Resolution 168 by voice vote, a quorum being present, and recommends its enactment.

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